

THE IVORY

GATE

ARMISTEAD

♦♦♦G♦♦♦

GORDON



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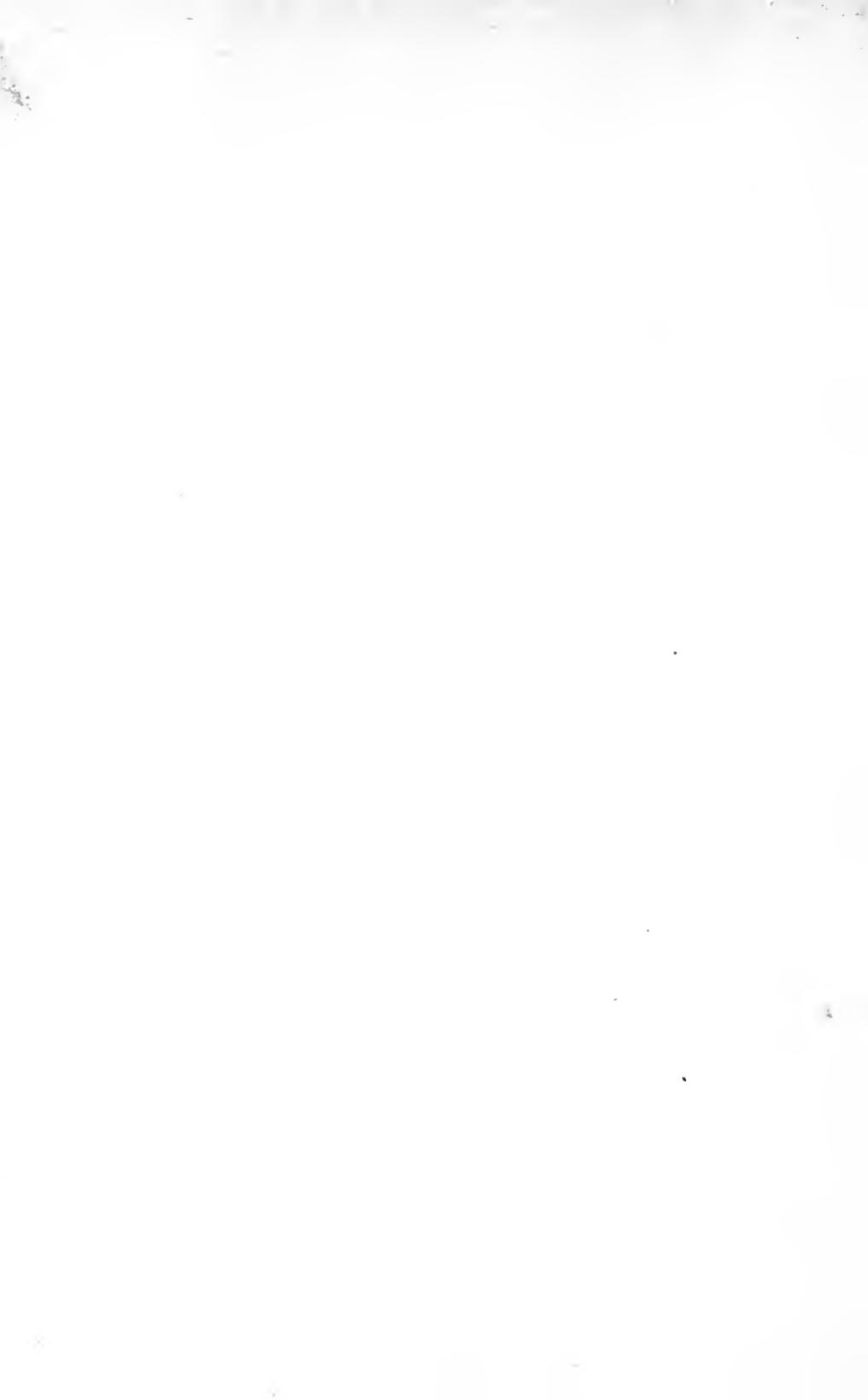
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THE GIFT OF
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ALEXANDER F MORRISON





THE IVORY GATE



THE IVORY GATE

BY

ARMISTEAD C. GORDON

"

*Sunt geminae Somni portae; quarum altera fertur
Cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris;
Altera, candenti perfecta nitens elephanto;
Sed falsa ad coelum mittunt insomnia Manes.*

VIRGIL.

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"When, loved by poet and painter
 The sunrise fills the sky,
When night's gold urns grow fainter,
 And in depths of amber die,—
When the moon-breeze stirs the curtain,
 Bearing an odorous freight—
Then visions strange, uncertain,
 Pour thick through the Ivory Gate."

MORTIMER COLLINS.

GIFT OF MRS. A. F. MCCLURE

431923

AUTHOR'S NOTE

A majority of the verses in this little volume were first printed at various times in literary periodicals and newspapers. "In Dreams" appeared in *The Continent*; "Parson Murray," "Four Feet on a Fender," "Transformation," "Her Rival," "Ah, Si Jeunesse Savait," "Lip Service" and "Law at Our Boarding House" were contributed to the *Bric-a-Brac* department of the old *Scribner's Monthly*, which later became *The Century*; and "Enise" first saw the light in the columns of the *Richmond (Va.) Transcript*, in 1878. "The Little Old Church" and "Cast Out" were originally published in a New England monthly whose name I have forgotten, conducted, I believe, by Dr. Washington Gladden; and "Long Ago" is embalmed in the faded pages of the long since defunct *South Atlantic*.

Several of the others date back to a youthful association with *The Virginia University Magazine*.

They are all old, in the sense that they have been long written. They are all young, in that they speak to their author, with the pathetic voices of the Greek chorus, of days and friends that vanished with his youth:

"We return, we return no more."

A. C. G.

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JOHN COFF
ALLEGORY
DEDICATION

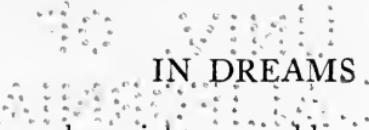
TO ONE WHO WILL UNDERSTAND

*Only you can stir once more
Pulses that my boyhood knew,—
Open wide the bolted door,—*

*Only you;
Lead the lost hours dancing through
Spaces where in days of yore
Roses bloomed and skies were blue.*

*Grim the gray years grow, and frore
Gleams the frost where shone the dew.
Naught those lost hours may restore,*

*Only you.
Let me dream the old dreams o'er,
Love is kind and faith is true,
Seeing with youth's eyes once more
Only you.*



IN DREAMS

In dreams, when nights are cold, and winter winds are
blowing,

When the hoar-frost on the house-tops glitters in the
chill moon's beams,
Old summer days come back, with June's gala roses
glowing

In dreams.

In dreams you wander with me beside the restless river
Where the willows touch the surface and the ruffled
water gleams,—

And I watch the sunshine on it where the weeping
willows quiver

In dreams.

In dreams your soft voice haunts me, and your love-
speech, low and tender,

As I bend my head to listen, like an angel's whisper
seems:

There is dew upon the grass there; and I catch the
morning's splendor

In dreams.

In dreams no fate divides us; you are mine to love
forever.

How the wild birds carol o'er us, and the golden
sunlight streams.

Love is mirrored in your eyes, as the willows in the
river,

In dreams.

In dreams, in dreams we part not. The day dawn and
the morrow
May take you; but each morning with the dreamer's
vision gleams.
You are mine when night recalls you, with your young
heart free from sorrow,
In dreams.

PARSON MURRAY

Of James City, in Virginia

Head peruked and shaven face,
Stately step and air of grace,
 Suit severe of sombre black,—
Smiles across his lips go fleeting
While he gives my Lady greeting,
 With a swift bend of his back.

“Dine on Thursday? What could be
More delightful? Then, D. V.,
 I shall be here on that day;”
And a lowlier bow then made he,
Kissed his gloved hand to my Lady,
 Mounted steed and rode away.

Parson Murray. Past the road
Where the fallow-fields lie broad,
 In the grove of trees up there,
Parson’s house-lights faintly glimmer
As the evening light grows dimmer
 And more cool the evening air.

Never voice of scolding wife
Maketh sad the parson’s life—
 Never voice of crying child;
And the winter evenings closing
Find him reading, dreaming, dozing,
 Drinking knowledge undefiled.

Slippers for the parson's feet
(Which, in sooth, are slim and neat)
 Soft white hands have made a score;
And the bright eyes on him glancing
Sometimes set his heart a-dancing;
 This they do, but nothing more.

All the men the country round
Fear his small-sword's lightest wound;
 In a fox-hunt no one's horn
Is so lusty in its warning
On the fine November morning
 Just before the sun is born.

At the ball where all the girls,
White arms bare and shining curls,
 Sparkling teeth and heavenly eyes—
Set the young bucks' hearts a-tremble,
Where the county's best assemble,
 Parson carries off the prize.

To the gay young gallants there,
Buckled pumps and powdered hair,
 Parson Murray yields no whit
In the stately dance, whose measure
Is the cadenced throb of pleasure,
 Grand old dance, the minuet.

Never any yeoman wight
Stripped more gladly to a fight
 Than he to the boxing-glove;
And a brooklet's voice at vesper
Is not sweeter than his whisper,
 When a lady lists his love.

In the dining-room, my Lord,
Standing by the huge sideboard,
 Watches with admiring eyes
How the parson brews the toddy,
Saying it is very odd, *he*
 Cannot make it in such wise!

Tithe and cummin, anise, mint,
Hath the parson without stint,
 Hath as well the people's trust.
Many in his years spent there
Hath he christened, and with prayer
 Many given back to dust.

Not a kindlier heart than his
Ever stirred a breast, I wis;
 Never smiled a sweeter face;
And his pure unselfish nature
Works delight for every creature,
 Beast and bird and human race.

Well he knoweth hymn and psalm;
When the Sabbath's holy calm
 Spreads its benison o'er earth,
Well he reads: "Good Lord, deliver!"
Well for life's gifts thanks life's Giver:
 Praises God for death and birth.

Many years have passed away
Since in old Colonial day
 Knelt the people at his word.
In the county of James City,
(On his tomb-stone "Christ have pitie!")
 Sleeps the parson with the Lord.

FOUR FEET ON A FENDER

It is anthracite coal, and the fender is low,
Steel-barred is the grate, and the tiles
Hand-painted in figures; the one at the top
Is a Japanese lady, who smiles.
There's an *or-molu* clock on the mantel; above,
A masterpiece: *fecit Gerome*;
On the fender four feet—my young wife's feet and
mine,
Trimly shod, in a row and—at home.

My slippers are broidered of velvet and silk,
The work of her fingers before
We stood at the altar. To have them made up
Cost me just a round five dollars more
Than a new pair had cost at my bootmaker's shop;
But each stitch was a token of love—
And she never shall know. Ah, how easy they are
On their perch the steel fender above.

Words fail me to tell of her own. There's a chest
In her father's old garret; and there
'Mid a thousand strange things of a century past
She discovered this ravishing pair.
They are small, trim and natty; their color is red;
And they each have the funniest heel.
White balbriggan stockings, high-clocked, underneath
These *decollete* slippers reveal.

Ah, many a time in my grandfather's day
They led the old fellow a dance.
They were bought with Virginia tobacco, and came,
Who would guess it?—imported from France.
How odd that yon stern-faced ancestor of mine
In the earlier days of his life
Should have loved her who tripped in these red slippers
then,—
The young grandmamma of my wife!

The course of some true loves, at least, runs not
smooth,—
And I'm glad that it's so, when I see
The trim, dainty feet in the red slippers there
Which belong to my lady—and me!
Two short months ago in this snug little room
I sat in this soft-cushioned seat;
No companion was near save my pipe. Now, behold
On the polished steel fender four feet!

Let them prate of the happiness Paradise yields
To the Moslem,—the raptures that thrill
The soul of the Hindu whom Juggernaut takes,—
The bliss of Gan-Eden;—and still
I'll believe that no gladness which man has conceived
Can compare with the tranquillized state
That springs from two small feet alongside one's own,
On the fender in front of his grate.

L'ENVOI

In vain the illusion. The trim feet are gone.
They trip by my door every day;—
Yet they stop not nor tarry; but swiftly pass on,
Nor can I persuade them to stay.
And a bachelor's dreams are but dreams at the best,
Be they never so fond or so sweet.
The anthracite blaze has burned low; and behold
On the fender *two* lonesome old feet!

TRANSFORMATION

If it be true that Time doth change
Each fibre, nerve and bone,—
That in a seven-years' circling range
New out of old hath grown,—

Time's a magician who hath made
A mystery passing strange:—
No outward symbol is displayed
To hint the subtle change.

Whate'er the magic he hath wrought
Within his seven years' span,
Your life is yet with beauty fraught
As when the charm began.

The rounded form of other years
Still keeps its crowning grace;
And June, for April's earlier tears,
Plants roses in your face.

But your great beauty touches me
Now, in no other way,
Than doth the splendor of the sea,
The glory of the day.

I dreamed I loved you in past years,
Ah! that was long ago.
How far the time-blown love-vane veers
This rhyme may serve to show.

The shifting seasons soon enough
Beheld the bright dream fade;
I learned to know the fragile stuff
Of which some dreams are made.

We meet now with a kid-gloved touch,
Mere courtesy each to each;
That earlier hand-clasp overmuch
Outvies our later speech.

And so, perhaps, it may be true
That, as you pass me by
In careless wise, you are not You,
And I'm no longer I.

ENISE

Very fair you are, Enise,
For you hold
In your eyes
All the blue of summer skies,
In your tresses all the shimmer
Of red gold.

And your cheeks are pink, Enise,
As a rose;
And your mouth
A sweet blossom of the South;
And tip-tilted like its petal
Is your nose!

And that form of yours, Enise,
Lacks no grace
Lilies wear;
And your bosom's swelling heave
Tells of sprites imprisoned there,
I believe,

That would fain be free, Enise,
For awhile.—
Yet your charms,—
Eyes and hair and throat and arms,—
None of these, Enise, bewitch me
Like your smile.

Did you ever know, Enise,
Of that creed
Which the old
Rabbins of the Talmud hold
Of all spirits? Should I tell you,
Would you heed?

You have lived alway, Enise,—
Thus they say,—
At the birth
Of your body on the earth,
Passed your ever-living soul
Into this clay.

And your guardian angel came,
Spread white wings
O'er you there,—
Touched his finger to your lips
With a prayer,—
And you knew no longer ante-natal things.

As the Rabbins, I, Enise,
Hold it too:—
When those wings
For a moment are uplifted
Memory brings
Visions of a happier life
Back to you.

Do you marvel thoughts like these
Should beguile
Minds like mine?
I can nothing else divine
That could lend such holy sweetness
To your smile.

“TOUJOURS JAMAIS”

’Twas a waltz of Weber they played that night,
And she was the gayest dancer there,
For her swift feet twinkled in rhythmic flight
As a bird’s wings through the air.
“One turn!” I pleaded, and heard her say,
Through the music of oboe and violoncello,
“You are just too late!” And she slipped away
In the arms of another fellow.

Her face was so honest and frank and fair,
Her figure so lithe and trim and neat,—
Such a faint gold tinge in her silken hair,
Her voice so low and sweet,—
That heels over head in love I fell;
And all through that dreamy summer weather
I flattered my soul that she loved me well—
When we were alone together.

I purchased her *bonbons*, I gave her flowers,
And day after day in some shady nook
I read to her love-songs in lazy hours
From some red-lined, gilt-edged book.
I dreamed, as the summer faded away,
I was tying a knot no time could sever,—
For my ring that she wore had “*Toujours jamais*”
Thereon; and that’s *forever*.

Month after month I followed my quest.

A bud from her bosom, a smile from her lips,
Would thrill my heart with a vague unrest,—

Or a touch of her finger tips.

Yet no matter the time, no matter the place,

Where roses blossomed, when leaves turned yellow,
She'd leave me alone with a smile on her face

At a word from that other fellow.

Though perturbed thereat, I could but beguile

My heart with "a spoiled girl's coquetry!"

For she ever gave me her fondest smile—

When the other one was not by.

And I built air-castles out in Spain

In a most extravagant, reckless fashion;

And my heart-strings echoed their one sweet strain,

To the touch of a master-passion.

L'ENVOI

That was long ago; yet whenever at night,

From my neighbor's parlor across the way
That waltz of Weber rings, airy and light,

'Neath *her* fingers' magic sway,

Old thoughts come back in a mystic maze,

With the music of oboe and violoncello,

Of the treacherous girl with the frank, fair face,

Who married the other fellow!

LONG AGO

Long ago the hand I clasped there had its loving hand-
clasp broken,
And the voices ceased from singing; and the cow-
bells, faint and low,
Died away as died the echoes of the words that we had
spoken

Long ago.

Long ago down paths divergent our parted ways we
wended;—
Through no scented meadow, mine, with its clover
blooms a-blow.
Has Love's sunset come for you? My heart's gay
summer ended

Long ago.

HER RIVAL

*(At Long Branch. Season of 1880.)**

“The belle?” ’Tis hard to say. And yet
There is a Cuban here—
“Handsome?” Well, yes. “Her style?” Brunette—
The darling of her sphere.

I’ve watched her, and she never moves
But some man walks close by;
And yet there’s no one whom she loves
Or hates—. “The reason why?”

Just wait a little, *ma cherie*:
“Her manners?” Neither grave
Nor gay. “The golden mean,” you say;
And yet the women rave—

“In praise?” Ah, no! One seldom hears
Her lauded by their lips;
Yet the sweet silence that she wears
Their malice doth eclipse.

“Brilliant?” At times. This nut-brown maid
Shines brightest when she meets
Her match. Thus conflict oft, ’tis said,
Inspires the doughtiest feats.

* Paraphrased from a society letter in the newspaper press.

“Her style of beaux?” Both young and old
Yield fealty to her sway:
Blonde beauty with his beard of gold,
And ugliness in gray.

Last night we sat 'neath the summer moon,
And her breath was like the rose;
And odours as sweet as buds in June
Follow her where she goes.

“I love her?” Truly, that I do.
’Tis not long since I spoke
My love. I don’t mind this to you,—
It ended all in smoke!

What, crying? “Hate her?” Then, I fear
I’ve carried the jest too far:
No rival is she of yours, my dear,—
And her name is just—Cigar!

“AH, SI JEUNESSE SAVAIT!”

Had Youth but known some years ago,
That freckled-faced small girls would grow,
 In most astounding way,
To lovely women in whose eyes
The light a man most longs for lies—
Ah, si jeunesse savait!

Had Youth but known—my youth, I mean,
That you would walk as regnant queen
 Of hearts in this new day—
That elfin locks could change to curls
Softer than any other girl's—
Ah, si jeunesse savait!

Had youth but known the time would come
When I should stand, abashed and dumb,
 With not one word to say,
Before you, whom in days gone by
I'd tease until you could but cry—
Ah, si jeunesse savait!

I little dreamed in those old days
Of undeveloped, winning ways
 To wile men's hearts away—
When wading in the brook with you
I splashed your best frock through and through.
Ah, si jeunesse savait!

Your pretty nose—ah, there's the rub,—
I used to laugh at once as “snub”
 Is now *nez retrousse*;
Upon the one-time brown, bare feet
You wear French kids now, trim and neat,—
 Ah, si jeunesse savait!

The brief kilt-skirt, the legs all bare,
The freckled face, the tangled hair,

 These things are passed away:
You are a woman now full grown,
With lovers of your very own—
 Ah, si jeunesse savait!

You'd plead to be my comrade then,
With tearful big, brown eyes.—Ah, when,

 My winning, winsome May,
Will words like those your lips a-tween,
Come back again? No more, I ween!

Ah, si jeunesse savait!

Time turns the tables. It is meet,
Doubtless, that I here at your feet

 Should feel your sceptre's sway—
Should know you hold me 'neath your heel,—
Should love you—and should—well, should feel:

Ah, si jeunesse savait!

TO EUTERPE

(An American Girl)

With cinctured robe and banded hair,
 On feet with sandals shod,
She came, whose heavenly name you bear,
 The daughter of a god,
Cycles of years ago. She came
 From Grecian woods and streams,
To set the hearts of men afame,
 And fill their days with dreams.

You come a newer day to bless,
 To banish grief and care,
To stir men's souls with happiness
 In visions no less fair.
To fill our hearts with dreams you come,
 Lovely and free from blame,
With songs of peace and hope and home,
 As long ago she came.

The trumpet of the soul to shrill,
 To brim the eyes with tears,—
To break sad hearts with joy,—are still
 Her glory through the years.
Not yours to bid life's pulses beat
 With passions fierce as these:
And yet your words, like hers, are sweet
 As Hybla's honeyed bees.

With cinctured robe and banded hair,
On feet with sandals shod,
She came, whose radiant name you bear,
The daughter of a god,—
The maid of lyric song. That name
She bore, you do not wrong:
With love you set our hearts aflame,
Yourself a heavenly song.

IDOLATRY

Words of praise and prayer enthrall
All your soul that worships where,
With the lights and shadows, fall
Words of praise and prayer.

O'er your slight form bending there
Rings the fluted choral call,—
Sunbeams haloing your hair.

All the soul that in me lives,
Spent with sin and fraught with care,
Only for your beauty gives
Words of praise and prayer.

THE LITTLE OLD CHURCH

I went to the little church to-day
Over the brook, beyond the hill.
It looks as it looked when I went away,
Green-yarded and white-paled still.

I was a youth when I crossed the sea
To wander in foreign lands, and lo!
Now there is gray in my beard. Ah, me!
Can it be so long ago?

There used to be in those far-back years
A little girl with a happy face,
And a sweet, strange fashion of smiles and tears,
And a young fawn's agile grace,

Who sat each Sunday serenely there
In that little church, where the sunlight fell
Through the window over her yellow hair
And over her face—ah, well!

Ah, well! And I—oh, that little maid,
I loved her truly. Each Sabbath day
I'd go there and watch how the sunshine played
In her hair, ere I went away.

Ere I went away. That was long years back,
And now I am middle-aged, forsooth.
It is hard that a brave, strong lad, good lack,
Must give up his brave, strong youth,

While a little church for years can seem
Unchanged. Why, to-day they sang that strain
That they sang long ago,—it was like a dream
Of my dead youth come again.

I sat in a dim, back-corner pew
Where I sat when a boy, and closed my eyes,
Till thoughts of the past and the present grew
Into solemn mysteries.

I dreamed I was young again,—that there
In the seat, three paces in front of me
The sunshine was dancing on yellow hair,
And I thought: “Can this thing be?

“I went to her grave ’neath the churchyard tree
On this very morn, ere I came in here,
Where I thought of the things that used to be
Till I felt on my face a tear.

“And now to think if I open my eyes
I shall see her kneel in that pew and pray
With a soul that is ready for Paradise—
As I did ere I went away!”

I opened my eyes and looked, but lo!
The pew was empty. The sunlight strayed
Up and down on the cushioned seat, as though
It sought for the little maid.

A butterfly drifted in, and flew
For a moment about, then out again.
“Into my life she came, like you,
And went,” I faltered in pain.

And the pastor read, "Even as water spilled
On the ground that cannot be gathered again
Are the children of men," and the sad words filled
My soul with a sadder pain.

When lo! the butterfly drifted in
Once more, and the pastor's lips then read,
"As little children are, free from sin."
"She is gathered to God," I said.

And I said, "You went, but you have returned.
I shall see her again in the years to be,—
In the years to be!" And my cold heart burned
By the wayside there in me.

I had not entered for many years
A church of Christ as I did to-day.
Till this morning mine eyes had not known tears
Since the time when I went away.

I think I shall go to this church always,
Till they carry me out to the graveyard tree,
For the sake of that dear girl's sweet young face,
And the days that used to be.

ROME AND EGYPT

With flower-face nestled close against his heart,
And upturned eyes wherein the love-lights wake
To fade away in tears for sweet love's sake,
And clinging arms, and lips that smile apart,
And whispered words that set the heated blood
Marching to fiery music, and perfumes
Subtle as stealthiest thieves, fit for the mood
Of loves like theirs, and in her breast white blooms
Of lotus, drifted on the ebb and flow
Of passion's tides, she holds him in her thrall.
Oh, he could wish no deeper joy than so
To die! Her dusk hair were a funeral pall
Meet for a king, and death itself were sweet
If her encircling arms might be his winding sheet.

LIP SERVICE

(In York Town Church, 1773. Modernized from an old MS.)

Outside the church the breezes blow
And wave the summer trees.
The fans within go soft and slow
To stir a fainter breeze.
The clerk doth shrill with thin voice cracked
His keen falsetto strain,
While in the family-pew, high-backed,
Behold our lovers twain.

Arranged in filmy furbelows,
Cool things of fluffy white,
Shod with high heels and pointed toes,
She is a winsome sight.
A blue cocked hat, bewrought with braid,
Her dandy sweetheart bears,
With shorts, high hose and coat,—well made
The raiment that he wears.

“Good sooth,” he thinks, his love beside,
“When such a hap shall be,
This bonny flesh and blood my bride,
What gladder heaven for me?”
The well-closed door from gossip’s view
Doth shut them, saints be praised!
This fashion of her father’s pew
His seven wits hath dazed.

He holds the corner of her book
The while she bends in prayer.
"What matter if one kiss I took—
A trifle light as air?"
Her breast scarce heaves, her face is meek,
Her eyes are in eclipse:
"Or shall I touch it to her cheek,
Or lay it on her lips?"

She little knoweth what rash thought
His bosom doth possess:
Her soul, on heavenly pinions caught,
Forgets earth's earthiness.
All worldly love and wordly dreams
Are lapsed in heaven-born bliss.
A most unmeetful time, it seems,
For our bold lover's kiss.

Thoughts heavenward borne on wings of prayer
Slight hap to earth may draw.
The soft salute doth miff our fair,
And on his nearer jaw
With mittened hand she plants a thwack
Which kindles all his rage.
Forth pew and church to good steed's back,
His anger to assuage!

No Sabbath ever more shall see
Our lovers in yon pew
From selfsame book the Litany
Lovingly going through.
No fee from him of Spanish eight
Stowed in a buckskin glove
The parson ever shall elate
To preach their wedded love.

L'ENVOI

A time for all things, ladies gay,—
Times, gallants, for each thing,
Since Love may go, or Love may stay
Who hath a fickle wing.
Lip-service fellows not with prayer,—
Ye may not woo in church,
Lest kisses welcome otherwhere
Here leave you in the lurch!

IN JUNE

The beetles boomed in the corn,
And the wheat-shocks stood a-row,
And the roses bloomed on that summer morn
When we parted, years ago.

The woodbine to the breeze
Its trailing banners flung,
And little birds piped in the leafy trees,
And love and life were young.

It has been so long, I forget
Why it was that we quarreled there,
Although I can well remember yet
The red rose in your hair.

But lost are features and form:—
A hazy passion of tears—
A vision of sunshine after storm—
These are all, in the lapse of the years.

And I sigh to think how soon
We forget and are forgot,—
How the stem that vaunted its bud in June
In the autumn knows it not.

Your face? I forget your face—
I forget our love words there,—
But never that June day's perfect grace,
Or the glory of that air.

And it still is sweet to me
To recall the rustling corn,
And meadow, and bird and leafy tree,
And the light of that June morn,

And the scarlet and green that showed
Where the trumpet-flower clung,
And the gold where the heart of a red rose glowed,
When life and love were young.

CAPRICE

She's the winningest face—
Not another's so fair is—
In the eyes of the writer, at least, of this ditty,—
Wears velvet and lace—
If she likes—and her hair is
The color of amber—a girl from the city,
And they call her Caprice.

Most appropriate name—
Such a variant creature
I never have met with before, upon honor:
One moment all flame,
Then like ice is her nature;
And at one time I bless her, and then I "Plague on
her!"
This fickle Caprice.

At the utmost eighteen
I should say that her age is;—
She promised to tell me, but never has done it.
She walks like a queen—
I could write twenty pages
About the slim foot with the button boot on it,
That belongs to Caprice.

In her luminous eyes
Gleams a mischievous madness;
As blithe as a bird's song her musical laughter.
But I've seen with surprise
The dark shadows of sadness

Steal into those eyes when the silence came after—
So quaint is Caprice.

I've repeatedly made
The most serious endeavor
To guess at her secret, to fathom her nature;
But the sunshine and shade
Interchanging forever
Only make more mysterious this charming young
creature,
Whose name is Caprice.

With her hand on my sleeve,
And her arch face turned to me,
She says, "I adore you!" one moment; then straightly
Says, "No, I believe
'Twas but fancy: let go me!
I hate you!" and walks from the room very stately.
Funny girl is Caprice!

I've a notion the mood
Of her sunniest spirits
Belongs to the mortal that clothes her,—her gladness
Was born with her blood;
But her young soul inherits
From the garden of Eden those shadows of sadness
In the eyes of Caprice.

However this be,
Of one fact I am certain:
She promised to—"What is this rhyme you're inditing?
Is it written to me?
Then I really will—" (Curtain.
Who would know just what happened, apply, please,
in writing,
To me—not Caprice!)

TO ONE IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

"To a boon Southern country they have fled."—
Matthew Arnold.

The small, sweet violet's blue eyes peep
From out its hood of leaves.
The glad world wakens from its sleep,
And swallows haunt the eaves.

Once more returns a subtle sense
Of quickening pulse and breath;
Returns once more, I know not whence,
Sweet life, where all was death.

And yet from this heart-breaking air
I miss thy words of cheer,
Thy smile, thy touch; and know not where
Thou art, who art not here.

To some boon country thou hast fled,
Whose confines pass my ken.
I only know thou art not dead,
And we shall love again,

Where small sweet violets blow like these,
And every fragrant thing,
And swallows build, and sky and breeze
Speak of an endless spring.

LAW AT OUR BOARDING-HOUSE

As fresh as a pink on the other side
Of the boarding house table she sits, and sips
Her tea, while I envy the china cup
That kisses her rosy lips.

She's a schoolgirl still in her 'teens. Her hair
She wears in a plait. We are vis-a-vis,
And I am a briefless barrister—
Yet she sometimes smiles at me.

My law professor would scowl, no doubt,
Could he know what havoc those eyes have wrought
With the doctrines of law he first instilled;—
What lessons those lips have taught.

"The clerk will issue a rule to plead,
And pleadings always with rules must chime."—
No need of "a rule to plead" with her,
And her rule-days are—all the time!

That old law-maxim that text-books teach
And the judges regard, "*Qui facit per
Alium, facit per se*" is held
In ineffable scorn by her.

In her person exist together at once
Defendant and judge and jury and clerk,
So that one would imagine to win a cause
In this court were an up-hill work.

Yet whenever I sit at the table there,
I fancy a table where only two
Are company—till I say to myself:
“Though you lose the case, why, sue!

“E’en though she demur at first, who knows?
For the rest of your joint lives, made one life,
You may learn together the lesson taught
In respect to Husband and Wife.”

Still I dally in doubt, though in other things
I flatter myself I am resolute,
For a bankrupt heart will be the result
If I’m taxed with costs in this suit.

THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS

All day upon the Idan hills
King Priam's Paris lay,
Keeping his father's bleating flocks,
Dreaming his life away;
Till round about him happy there
Gathered a glorious three:
Star-eyed Athene, high Jove's spouse,
And Venus of the Sea.

And Priam's son must needs adjudge
A golden apple there,
Whereon was graven, "Let me be
A prize to the most fair."
So she whose cradle was Jove's brain
Said, "Give to me, I pray,
And take thou wisdom to thy part,
And knowledge and wide sway."

Then ox-eyed Juno spake, "Give thou
This bauble unto me,
So shalt thou have all wealth that springs
From land or sky or sea."
But foam-born Venus, tossing back
The splendor of her hair,
Unto the royal shepherd's gaze
Her silver breasts laid bare,

Saying, "Behold! And if this prize
Shall well awarded be,
Then gainest thou a love as fair
As Venus of the Sea!"
So Paris with his heart aflame
Bestowed it in his joy,
And this is how sweet Helen came
To fire the heart of Troy.

Long since the bleating flocks have died
That Paris watched that day;
Nor do Olympian dwellers now
O'er Ida make their way.
Yet still, as Paris did of old,
Do men take heart of grace
To barter wisdom, power and gold
For Beauty's Helen-face.

A TREE IN TEVIOTDALE

*“Es steht ein Baum in Odenwald
Das hat viel grüne Äste.”*

By Teviotside a braw beech-tree
His branches flings fu' high.
A thousan' times my luv an' me
Ha'e passed his shadow by.

A throstle whusslit there his sang
Through the blithe simmer day;
We hearkened, loiterin' alang,
Loof linked in loof, that way.

Adoun the path but late I hied,
The beech-tree's leaves were gane;
Anither lad walked by her side,
An' reft frae me mine ain.

In Teviotdale the tree still stan's,
An' I'm in Aberdeen
Wi' achin' heart an' empty han's,
The wearies' mon e'er seen.

THE SIREN'S SONG OF HYLAS

Hylas is coming through the wood,
The birds sing over him where he goes;
The smell of the gum trees melts his mood,
Under his foot is the red wild-rose.

Fair Larissa shall mourn for him
Rapt from her bosom, as in a dream
The lapsing moons and the waters dim
Steep him in slumber beneath this stream.

I have netted my hair in a cunning snood
To capture and keep the beautiful one.
The breath of my beauty shall stir his blood,
I will hold him fast when the dusk slips down.

He shall forget in his perfect pleasure
The sorrows of them that bend the oar.
The wassail-song and the wine-cup's measure,
These shall never touch Hylas more.

Hark to his coming beyond the wood!
The birds sing over him as he goes.
I will pluck and wear in my maiden mood
The heart of Hylas, a blood-red rose.

GUINEVERE TO LANCELOT

Gone is my Lord, the King; and, Lancelot, never
May I behold thy face on earth again;
For I have sworn it with an oath, to sever
The bond—blot out the stain.

Down into Lyonesse my Lord is wending
His way to fight with Modred, where his doom
Bideth his coming, where the crags ascending
From the dusk sea break in gloom.

His love is lost to me, and yet he kissed me,
Oh Lancelot, stooping to me from above,
And told me how his kingly heart had missed me,
Since learning of our love.

O'er his blonde beard rippled in waves my golden
Loose hair, and oh! he laid his lips upon
Mine eyes, as he was wont to in the olden
Days that are dead and gone,

And after, rode forth, Lancelot, and on-sweeping,
Went down to Lyonesse to meet his doom
In thickening shadows, leaving me here weeping
Cooped in this nun's bleak room.

Gone is my Lord, the King! And thou, oh lover!
Where art thou, Lancelot? Could I see thy face,
And feel thy lip touch as in days now over,
This dull, forsaken place

Would be as Camelot in time of tourney,
When thou as knight for me didst aye enlist.
Ah! Lancelot, love, there lies a weary journey
From thee to me, I've wist.

My Lord, the King, is gone! And I have sworn it!
May such an oath the white Christ's servant break?
Oh, long as I can bear it, I have borne it!
Come, Lancelot of the Lake!

Mine be the shame, as mine the sin, oh lover!
Oh Lancelot, sweet, thy way unto me win!
His doom Pendragon's fair young head hangs over!
Mine be the shame, the sin!

Come, Lancelot, come, and let us once more wander
Through purple fields, into the brave, bright day,
Where blossoms blow, birds sing and brooks meander,
Out of this night, away!

Come, Lancelot, come, and rain thy hot, quick kisses,
As in old days, on eyes and mouth and chin!
Mine be the sin of all thy mad caresses—
The stain, the shame, the sin!

CAST OUT

Cold, oh so bitter cold the night,
And in the darkened room
No single gleam to put to flight
The shadows and the gloom.

A little baby lies asleep
Upon the mother-breast,
And tear-dimmed eyes a vigil keep
In agonized unrest.

Outside the street is bright like day—
Outside in heedless wise
The heedless world goes on its way,
Nor dreams of tear-dimmed eyes.

Perhaps he mingles with the throng,
And men and women greet
With kindly words the living wrong
Who dares to walk that street.

Dark, dark the river rolls, and deep
Beyond the garish light.
Oh, why not go and sink to sleep
In its unending night?

Ah no! The baby on her breast—
The thought its being gives—
These hold her from a dreamless rest,
These keep her, that she lives.

There was a time when women loved
To look upon her face—
When all the world in which she moved
Was full of peace and grace;

When laughing plenty at her feet
Poured out its lavish store,
And many a man who walks that street
By her pure being swore.

But now, the baby on her breast,—
And now, the bitter cold,—
The abject want, the wild unrest,—
And oh, the tale is told.

BY THE SEA

An Orphean power the soul to stir
With music's voice is hers:
To wake the smile, to start the tear,
To blot out days and years.

Outside, the wild waves tossing high
In ceaseless monotone
Moan to the dark night's starless sky
A sorrow all their own.

But here no gloom of grief can come
That may not find relief
In tears, as sweet as love and home,—
The anodyne of grief.

Vanish the days with sorrow gray,
Smile earth and sky and sea,
What time her witching fingers sway
The magic keys for me.

TIDES

On a bright morning, in a long-past summer,
I sat with you beside the ancient seashore.
The sunlit ocean boomed in on its flood-tide,
 And youth was golden.

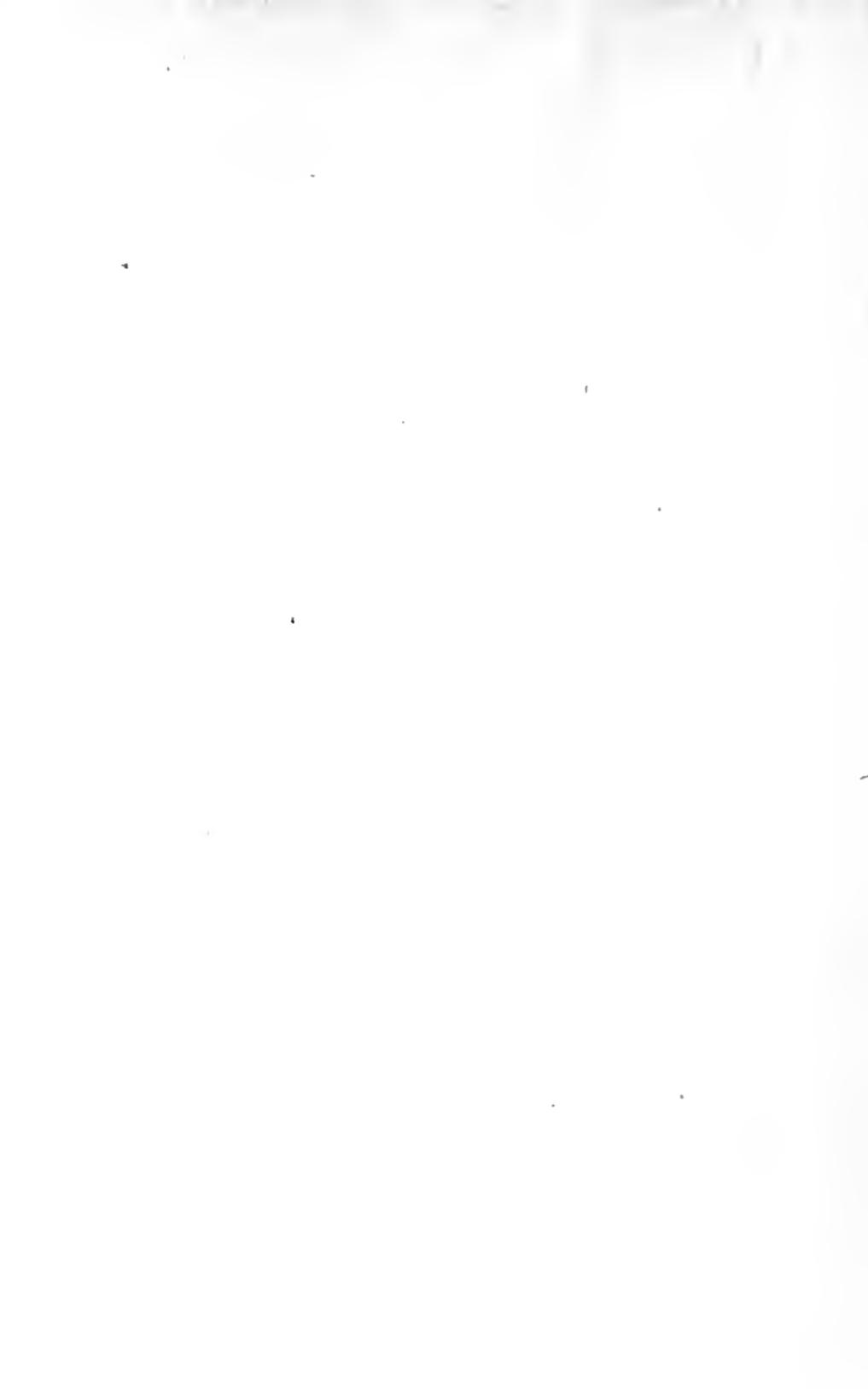
In the far offing sailed the snowy shallop.
The wanton waves were white and silver crested,
And life was sunny as the shining morning
 That lay about us.

And you—across the years I can remember—
Yours was a paean of young love and laughter,
While the waves chanting a majestic chorus
 Sang joy eternal.

Now there is winter in the chill, bleak sunset,
That lies upon the sleepless, sobbing ocean,
As the weak waters crawl out where the tide ebbs,
 And leaves us helpless.

Life has grown cold under a gray December,
The white-sailed shallop of that day have vanished,
When we together here in summer's sunshine
 Loved at youth's flood-tide.

A little while, and you and I, dissevered
A little while perchance in life's sad winter,
Shall clasp lost hands once more upon a seashore
 Beyond all parting.



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